



Minnesota Transportation Museum

MINNEGAZETTE

September/October 1987



Official Publication of the

MINNESOTA TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM, INC.

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CIRCULATION

The Minnegazette is published bi-monthly by the Minnesota Transportation Museum, Inc., and is mailed to members in good standing without charge under Third Class postal permit. Members may request First Class mailing for an additional \$5 per year charge.

SUBMISSIONS

The Minnegazette welcomes submissions for publication of articles, photos and other illustrative materials of historical or current interest relating to transportation in the Upper Midwest. No payment is made, and publication is at the editors' discretion.

MUSEUM PURPOSE

The Museum is a non-profit educational corporation organized in Minnesota in 1962, to acquire, restore, maintain, exhibit, and operate historical artifacts of land transportation. It operates the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line and the Minnehaha Depot in Minneapolis, the Jackson Street Roundhouse in St. Paul, and the Stillwater & St. Paul Railroad in Stillwater, Minnesota.

MUSEUM OFFICERS

President.....Eugene Corby
Executive VP.....Robert Renz
Secretary.....David Norman
Treasurer.....Russel L. Olsen
VP/Traction.....Curt Allen
VP/Railroad.....Kenneth Snyder
VP/Stillwater.....John Stein
Directors at Large.....Arthur E. Pew III
Lowell Saterbak
Marvin Schnickels
Counsel.....Richard Walkovets

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Front Cover:

Minnesota Transfer Alco's wait for C&NW "Victory" to pass Raymond Avenue yard, St Paul. Aaron Isaacs reports in this issue.

Arthur Hager Photo Courtesy of J J Hill Library.

Editorial

Finding Photos

My involvement with the **Minnegazette** began when I submitted a few photos. Before long I was sending in pictures by other people that I had happened upon and thought were interesting. One thing led to another, and in no time I was helping put the magazine together. No small part of that is finding 25 to 30 good pictures for each issue; not just any pictures, mind you, but of Museum activities or historic Minnesota rail subjects. On top of that, they should be striking or at least photographically interesting. Muddy, blurred or dull pictures can run only if they show something particularly rare.

Where to find such pictures? Some just appear, sent to the **Minnegazette** by members and non-members, and building the magazine's files into an interesting collection by themselves. It occurred to me that the files should become the basis for an MTM display collection and photo archive. We will need something to display at Jackson Street Roundhouse when the time comes.

I began searching historical society collections under obvious index headings like "railroad" and "streetcar." Others having had the same idea, these files usually have been searched already. The real finds are under generic headings like "city views," "street scenes" and the albums of commercial photographers. Here is buried a wealth of trains and trolleys, inadvertently captured while the photographer shot something he felt to be more important.

The discoveries make it worthwhile. For example, the **Stillwater Public Library** has much of the collection of the town photographer **John Runk**. There are two views of the Omaha Road's "Scoot" which made several daily trips to the mainline at Hudson with an ancient 2-6-0 and an open platform combine coach. The **Ramsey County Historical Society** yielded some 1948 Highway

Department views of University Avenue before it was rebuilt, with PCC streetcars. The **Hopkins Historical Society**, which I never knew existed, held an 1890's shot of the pre-Twin City Lines trolleys in St. Louis Park.

There was a "dinosaur photo" of a rare subject, a close up of a Minneapolis, Lyndale & Minnetonka conventional locomotive that hauled Motor Line trains between the City Limits and Excelsior. Coincidentally, I had unearthed another view of these engines at the Minnesota Historical Society just a month earlier. It was part of an album of Lake Minnetonka steamboats.

The **Minnesota Historical Society** of course is a great treasure trove. Unlike the smaller historical societies, one cannot hope to leaf through their material in a day or two. There are huge amounts of material. One wonderful album contains 195 Twin City area steam locomotives photos dating from 1920-1935. The photographer, **Helmut Kroening**, deserves grouping with masters like Alfred Johnson and Richard Kindig. The photos are fully captioned. MTM should seriously consider re-issuing them as a book.

Beyond the historical societies, many photos are in the hands of individuals. Museum members have contributed a few of their favorites, and we hope they will continue to do so. Invite us over for a look if you prefer. Consider consigning them to the Museum as part of your will if you prefer, so that they will have a permanent home available to the public.

Finally, we are considering advertising among those who conduct estate sales to notify MTM if they come across rail-related items. Who knows what is hidden in the attics of Minnesota.

The Museum is rightly called an educational organization. With your help we can put together the best rail photo collection in the State.

Aaron Isaacs
Feature Editor

1987 Annual Meeting

The 1987 Annual Meeting and Election of Officers will be held November 24, 7:30 p.m., at the Northwestern National Life Insurance Building, Washington & Marquette Avenues, Minneapolis.

President's Message

We did a lot in 1987. Our track program at Stillwater took a big jump ahead of anything we accomplished before. Weekly operations for the first time ever at Stillwater proved that it can be a permanent, viable exhibit.

Members responded to Art Pew's challenge by contributing enough money to launch the Jackson Street Roundhouse project. A permanent storage building and a lot of new track are being installed on the site this Fall, just in time for our move from the Minnesota Commercial Railway roundhouse.

The Como-Harriet Streetcar Line also completed an ambitious track program, and continues to push ahead the restoration of Car 78. Streetcar ridership was strong and Traction continues to be our most successful exhibit.

All who helped make all these things happen should feel proud and satisfied. What we did this year is remarkable and will be a basis for growth in the future. We need to be concerned about the future, however, because it seems that fewer and fewer of us are chasing after more and more work.

Directors and regularly active members alike feel burned out by this year's efforts. Most of the Board will not seek re-election and, for the first time in our history, the Nominations

Committee cannot find enough candidates to fill all the elective offices. Word seems to have gotten out that working for MTM can be more of a job than a recreational pastime.

We cannot maintain our many commitments unless more members volunteer, not just as grunt laborers but as organizers and leaders of the Museum. Capable, dedicated leaders are every bit as important as those who mainly work with their hands.



Doris Vollgny, Tony Becker and Mike Buck attend MTM train, Stillwater, August, 1987.

The annual election of officers on November 24 could be a critical turning point for MTM. For the first time, nominations from the floor will determine who will fill most of the 1988 offices including president. That will place full responsibility for what happens to this Museum squarely on the shoulders of those members who care enough to attend that Annual Meeting.

I supported the Nominations Committee recommendation for a By-Law change to permit mailed paper ballots. I very much hope the next Board will take up that question next year. Obviously, not every member can attend the Annual Meeting, and a By-Law provision is long overdue that would permit absentee voting.

In the meantime, I urge each and every member who can to attend the Annual Meeting on November 24, and to participate in the election of officers. We all have big personal investments in this organization, whose future is riding on this election.

Eugene J Corbey
President

Nominations Committee Strikes Out

The 1987 Nominations Committee came up short of candidates it believes are both qualified and willing to serve on the 1988 Board of Directors. It endorsed candidates for only three of the seven elective offices. Pending other endorsements which may be announced at the Annual Meeting on November 24, the committee's recommendations for 1988 are as follows:

President	-	None
Executive VP	-	None
Treasurer	-	None
Secretary	-	Jim Woodward
VP - Stillwater	-	None
VP - Traction	-	Curt Allen
VP - Railroad	-	Ken Snyder

The panel composed of Chair **Ward Gilkerson**, **Mike Buck** and **Scott Heiderich** sought to enlist new candidates for the 1988 Board who have not previously served. A second goal was to broaden member participation in the election of officers. The committee met several times beginning in August, often for as long as three hours at a time. Candidates were considered who have participated in several Museum activities, who have shown leadership ability and who have represented MTM well in outside contacts.



MTM's no. 105 pulls Minnesota Zephyr dinner train westbound at Manning Avenue, Stillwater, August, 1987. Loren Martin Photo.

A majority of current officers declined re-nomination. Moreover, the committee noted great reluctance to volunteer for leadership roles among those members it contacted. The reason most cited was that, in general, MTM officers must make virtually a full-time commitment, one that is likely to interfere with family, job and other commitments. Several said they would participate in work groups but not in organizational capacities. Several cited over-frequent and protracted Board meetings.

Committee members believe that MTM has let its goals mushroom out of control without concurrently expanding our base of volunteer support. Mike Buck observed that MTM needs achievable goals that members are willing to support with their active participation. He said, without this support, progress slows and Board members run out of enthusiasm.

The Nominations Committee recommended a By-Law change that would have permitted members to vote by mailed paper ballots, instead of the current system by which only those who attend the Annual Meeting may vote. The Board of Directors tabled the committee recommendation indefinitely. The change was aimed at broader participation in elections.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors took the following action at its meeting of **August 18:**

1. Tabled a proposal to amend the By-Laws that would permit absentee voting by mail in annual election of officers.

The Board took the following actions at its meeting of **September 15:**

1. Set requirement of a \$1,000 cash advance for use of Museum equipment in commercial advertising.
2. Granted a 30-day lease, renewable through December 31, 1987, to **Minnesota Zephyr Inc.** for use of the Stillwater trackage.
3. Authorized **John Stein** to spend up to \$15,000 on track repairs at Stillwater.
4. Tabled proposal to permit mailed balloting in election of officers.
5. Authorized the president or his appointee to contract with **Lester's Inc.** for a new maintenance building at Jackson Street Roundhouse, St. Paul, the total price not to exceed \$80,000.
6. Authorized MTM participation in a railroad show to be held at the

Amtrak Station October 24.

The Board took the following actions at its meeting of **September 29**:

1. Limited the size of new Lester's building to 96 by 70 feet, and authorized provision of roof clerestories and board and batten siding on the building.

2. Authorized expression of interest in participating in **Minnesota Music Festival**, June 17-26, 1988.

3. Directed that **Reuben Winter** be hired to inspect **Minnesota Zephyr Inc.** dinner train cars.

The board approved the following actions at its meeting of **October 13**:

1. Approved a 15-year lease with **Minnesota Zephyr Inc.** for use of the Stillwater trackage.

2. Authorized acquisition of ex-

TCRT car 1239 for static display at Jackson Street Roundhouse, acquisition to be by donation and transportation cost not to exceed \$3,500.

3. Accepted the resignation of **Robert L. Renz** as Executive Vice President, with the position to remain vacant for remainder of current term.

4. Authorized **John Stein** to execute an agreement with **Stillwater Downtown Business Association** by which MTM would sell Bayport Depot for \$1, SDBA would move depot to Stillwater, and both organizations to share use of it.

Rain Soaks 228-0263

The Museum's recorded information message was out of service for three weeks during September, due to a leaky roof. A heavy rain managed to soak the answering machine at a time when roof repairs were proceeding

directly above the temporary office. The machine had to be replaced.

The answering machine also was off for short periods while repairs were made to the building's electrical system. The problems were under control by early November, and the answering machine is expected to be in service for the foreseeable future.

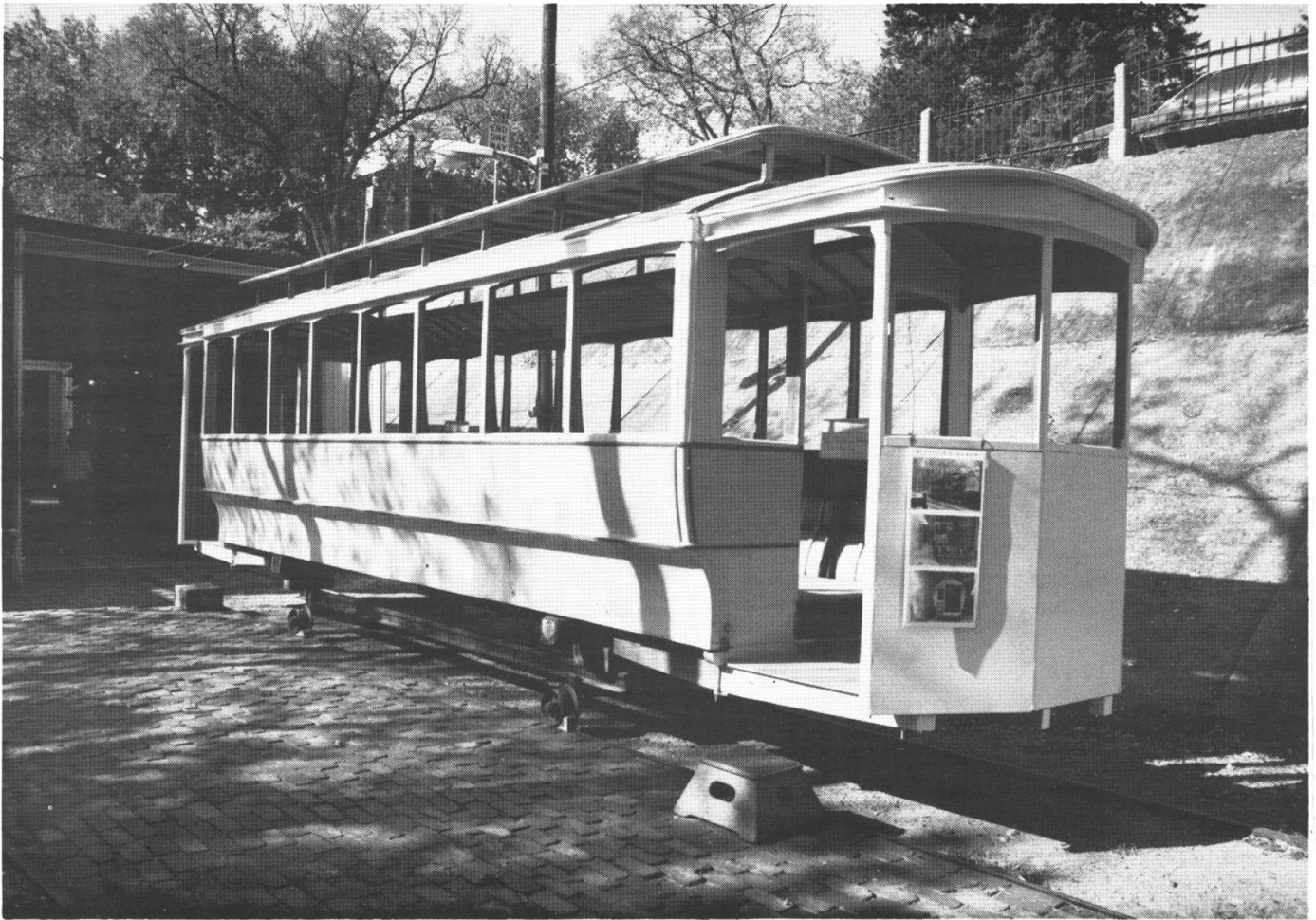
So don't despair; call the number if you have questions about what's happening.

Telegraphy Returns to Minnehaha Depot

Traffic was hot and heavy on the Morse wire September 13 at **Minnehaha Depot** in Minneapolis. Every three minutes a telegram clickety-clacked its way way between the depot and a Soo Line Caboose, former MN&S No. 100. The occasion was "A Fair of the Heart," kick-off observance for the the Hennepin and



Milwaukee Road A-Class Hudson has been demoted from mainline "Hiawatha" service. Uncaptioned photo possibly shows her on Madison-Chicago "Varsity." R V Nixon Photo Courtesy of Northstar Chapter, NRHS.



Duluth Street Railway No. 78 still on shop truck sports finished vestibules and new paint at Linden Hills barns, Minneapolis, October 4, 1987.

Ramsey Counties United Way Campaigns for 1987.

The telegraph exhibit resulted from the combined efforts of **Soo Line**, **Burlington Northern**, **MTM**, the **Morse Telegraph Club** and the **Minnesota Historical Society**. Over 90 exhibits were spread out around the Depot. Spectators wrote telegrams to each other to be tapped out in the operator's bay of the Depot and received in the caboose. MTM prepared Specially designed commemorative telegraph blanks, in yellow like the Western Union blanks of old.

Bob Branchaud, President of the Telegraph Club, and **Curt Allen**, an MTM vice president, organized the cooperative event. Museum members **Bill Marshall** and **Merle Haugen** along with Telegraph Club Members **Bill Feit**, **Bud Godin**, **John Reinke**

and **Stan Stenerson** each worked two hour tricks at the key and receiver. Among the messages transmitted were "Hi, you cute little hunk " and "your eggplant are really good."

Club members hope that future MTM railroad activities can include telegraphy practice and exhibits which were so much a part of the history MTM seeks to preserve.

Traction Report

The Traction Division hosted both the "9th Annual Streetcar Company Picnic" and the Museum's 25th Anniversary observance at the Linden Hills carbarns on Sunday, October 4. Cars 1300 and 265 ran full all afternoon, carrying Museum members and the public free of

charge. Television news teams covered the event.

"Annual streetcar company picnics" have a bona fide historical precedent. **Twin City Lines** held its first employees picnic at Wildwood Park in 1899. The event subsequently rotated among Wildwood, Mounds, Minnehaha and Big Island Parks. Attendees received colored lapel ribbons to be worn on shirts or jackets. The Museum received a collection of these ribbons in 1976, which spawned the idea for our own annual streetcar company picnic.

Since MTM train operations began in 1980, the picnic has rotated between the Traction and Railroad divisions in alternate years. This makes the title and numbering of picnics held at Lake Harriet somewhat misleading.



Carbarn area during 9th Annual Streetcar Company picnic Oct 4,



Curt Allen and Doris Voligny tend grill. Bill Graham Photos

Well over 300 attended the picnic to visit and munch burgers, brats, MTM's secret but much touted baked bean recipe, and tables of confectionery delights.

Car 78 was a featured attraction for the first time this year, spotted outside for all to examine. The carbarn crew had hustled for a month to finish applying the roofing, body hardware

and paint. Though still at least a year from completion, the carbody now resembles its new in 1893 appearance, and picnic goers were impressed.

Work on No. 78 now is shifting to the interior. Wiring for compartment lights is strung and ceiling panels are going up. Rock maple flooring salvaged from Jackson Street

Roundhouse is being refinished so that framing the bench seats can begin. Two new pinion gears on order from Brussels, Belgium, are expected to arrive shortly.

The 1988 ridership tally was 47311 of which 4630 represented charter passengers. This is ahead of 1986 and the 6th biggest year since streetcar operation began in 1971.

The wait for PCC cars from Cleveland, OH, will be still a little longer. The Regional Transportation Authority sold two lots of surplus cars this summer, but the unmodified cars we want were not among them. Seems hard to believe that 40-year old cars still are too good to part with, but we always knew they were good cars. It could be 1988 or later before our PCC's finally come home to roost.

To each member who worked on maintenance gangs, operating crews, publicity and organizational jobs, I want to extend congratulations and thanks for another very good year at the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. We succeeded once again in satisfying ourselves along with the thousands who visited our exhibit. Each year things get a little better at Lake Harriet, and it is only because so many of us keep coming back to volunteer our time and talents.

Don't drift away, and more important, how about actively recruiting some new faces to help keep the cars running next year? We need to do it all over again in 1988 and for years beyond that. Today's newcomer could well become tomorrow's foreman, superintendent or VP. Running a streetcar line is like fishing: it's a tough job, but someone has to do it. See you next year.

Curt Allen
VP - Traction

Railroad Report

LST&T switcher No 102 has been sandblasted, painted, and re-lettered "Minnesota Transportation Museum Ry." The engine's cab



MTM's train holds newly rebuilt Summit siding as eastbound Minnesota Zephyr passes on mainline, August, 1987. Aaron Isaacs Photo..

floor has been rebuilt and its air compressor repaired. It was displayed at Amtrak Midway on October 24. Rewiring work is progressing on switcher No 103.

Engine 328 was run for the Minnesota Commercial Railway's company picnic held October 10 at the Transfer roundhouse. The engine pulled office car A-11 and NP caboose 1631 between the roundhouse and Raymond Avenue. No 328's boiler has been washed and drained for the winter.

The volunteers are packing and moving from the old Transfer to MTM's Jackson Street facility this Fall. Help is always needed, so please do not hesitate to stop by Wednesday evenings and Saturdays

Minnegazette Deadline

Please mail photos and articles for the November/December Minnegazette to the Editor by Dec.20,1987.

Jackson Street Report

New Roof Keeps Out Rain

The old roundhouse will have a new roof by early November. MTM's contractor, **All Systems Roofing** of St. Paul, is installing a neoprene rubber membrane glued to hard board which is fastened over one inch of polystyrene foam insulation. A 20-year guarantee is provided. The total cost will be about \$110,000 to be paid from the subscription fund raised by MTM members last Spring.

The cost of repairs to the 80 year old timber roof structure could not be known in advance. Fortunately, it has been found in better condition than expected, but structural repairs will add as much as \$25,000 to the base cost of the new roof.

The old roof had leaked far and wide for some time, and has had to carry big snow loads in the years since the building has gone unheated. The roof purlons that support the timber deck are six by twelve inch Douglas fir timbers measuring 18 to 28 feet long. At least ten were broken or rotted to the point where they needed replacement.

The engineering firm of Harty & Elving advised using laminated structural beams which are stronger and cheaper than the original material. The roofer replaced over 2,000 square feet of tongue and groove fir plank-ing in sections of roof rotted by standing water.

The new roof is beautiful, durable, and with proper care will last a generation. The expenditure at this time can be questioned, but the roof had reached a point where major repairs could not be deferred without jeopardizing the integrity of the building.



Loren Martin and Hudson Leighton (in loader) lift rail from MTM's flatbed trailer at Jackson Street Roundhouse, August 21, 1987. Bill Graham Photo

Electric service in MTM's area has been isolated from the tenant's service, and has been separately metered. New yard lights have been installed in the west side yard area. The northerly fence line has been cleared, and a new chain link fence has been erected to completely enclose the west side yard.

Track Work Begins

On three succeeding Saturdays, September 12-26, large gangs of Museum members and volunteers from **Burlington Northern** built the new trackage access to the Roundhouse property. The work included removing about 500 feet of BN spur track, replacing it with new materials, and building two new turn outs.

Webster Wood Products Company donated two new sets of oak switch ties. **Burlington Northern** provided new soft wood ties, plus spikes, bolts, bars and anchors at cost to complete the tracks. MTM members under leadership of **Rod Kriesel** provided the rails from the Waite Park salvage operation.

The BN maintenance of way employees who pitched in were: **John Flaherty, Robert Gerner, Bruce Glover, Jeffrey Hensen, Bradley Johnson, Karl Knutsen, Michael McEachern, Lynn Pauls, Eugene Puch, Thomas Sorman** and supervisor **Bill Korte**. Four M/W office staff members also lent invaluable assistance: **Barbara Bontjes, Claire Lee, Jean Lowe and Elizabeth Politte**. The Museum thanks these members of the Brotherhood for generously donating their time and straining their backs over three Saturdays to help get us our connection with the outside world.

At least 20 MTM'ers turned out on each of the three Saturdays to work all day at what probably is the hardest job in railroading. **Orville Richter**, MTM's roadmaster at Stillwater, supervised members' work and coordinated with **Bill Korte** of BN. It all went smoothly, and got done just as planned.

Storage Building Goes Up

The garage area of the roundhouse is the only sizable room not leased to MTM's tenant. Making it into an

exhibit and restoration space would mean costly renovation of an area that is slated for demolition in six to eight years. The alternative would be to begin one of the free-standing storage building shown in the long range plan.

A contract was let in October with **Lester's, Inc.** of Lester Prairie for a 96 by 70 foot storage shed just west of the roundhouse along the northerly boundary. The timber post and beam structure will sit on a poured concrete foundation. The back wall will begin 100 feet west of the northwest loading dock. It will be extended to join the dock when more money becomes available. For the present, it will give MTM indoor space equivalent to four coaches. Construction will take about three weeks to complete.

The appearance of this building is important to the image of Jackson Street. To make it resemble an authentic railroad shed, two clerestories have been added to the roof. These are similar to the engine house at Ironworld and to the old Jackson Street blacksmith shop just west of our roundhouse. Three sides will have simulated board and batten siding. These features add to the cost, but adding them later would incur unacceptable penalties.

Laying track from the new BN connection into the building will begin soon and continue into the winter weather permitting. This will be another first for MTM. Those hardy enough to be interested are asked to contact me and volunteer their help.

Bill Graham
Jackson Street Coordinator





Great Northern Interchange drag enters Minnesota Transfer "A" yard, Raymond Avenue, St Paul, about 1950. Arthur Hager Photo

Heart Of The Midway

The Minnesota Transfer Railway

-Aaron Isaacs

The Early Years

The proliferation of new railroads in the late 19th century created the problem of efficiently interchanging cars among mainline carriers in big city terminals. Across the nation, railways with the words "terminal," "belt" and "transfer" in their names were built to act as clearing houses. In the 1870's, **James J. Hill** bought a large tract of land in the northwestern corner of St. Paul. He sold the land in 1880 at cost to the **Union**

Stockyard/Minnesota Transfer, a joint undertaking of several railroads that built a small amount of track and foreshadowed the incorporation of the **Minnesota Transfer Railway** in 1883.

Initially, the Transfer was owned jointly by the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba (later the Great Northern); the Northern Pacific; the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha (Omaha Road); the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul (Milwaukee Road); and the Minneapolis & St. Louis. Joining the ranks of owning railroads in 1886 were the Minnesota,

St. Croix & Wisconsin (later Wisconsin Central); the Minnesota & Northwestern (later Chicago Great Western; and the Chicago, Burlington & Northern (later, Chicago, Burlington & Quincy). Still later, the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie in 1898; and the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific bought shares in the Transfer in 1902.

Mergers took their toll over the decades. By 1987, only Burlington Northern, Soo Line and Chicago & North Western were left as owners.

The Transfer was a non-profit corporation, billing its owners on a cost only basis. Until 1923 every car interchanged in at the Twin Cities was required to pass through the Minnesota Transfer. The practice



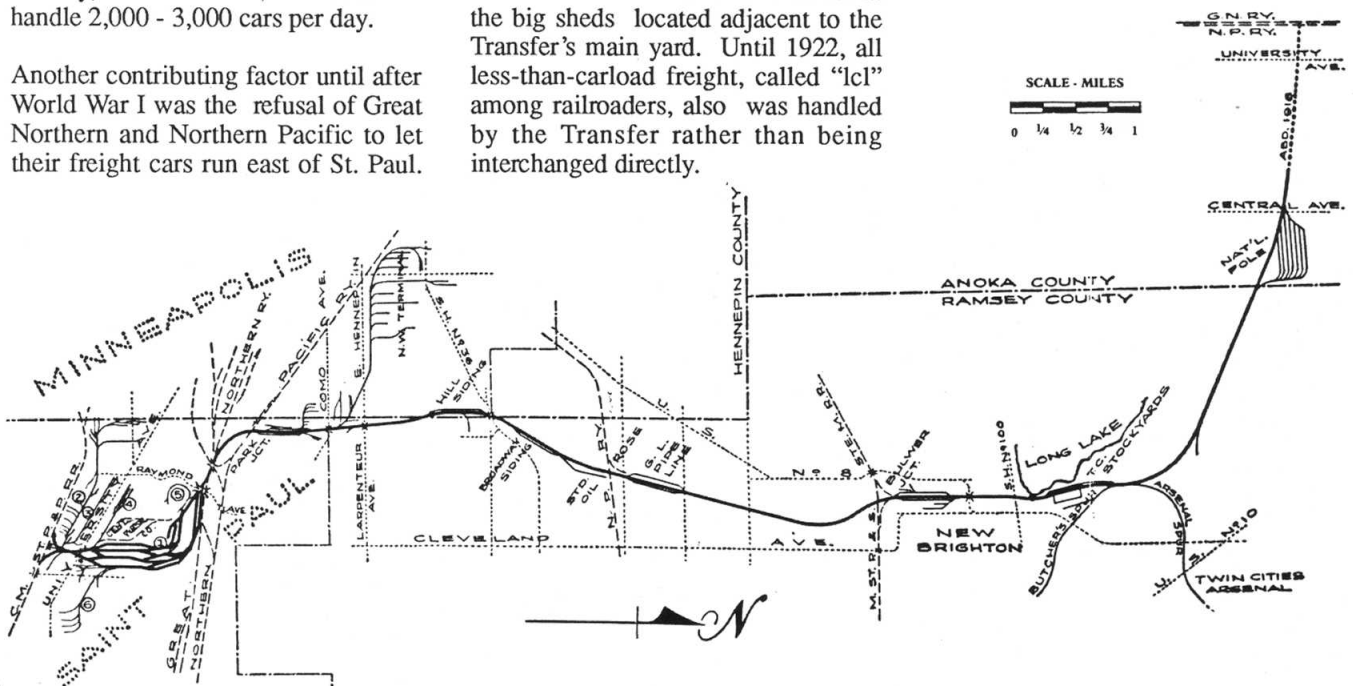
There's first generation power (ALCO, EMD, Baldwin) in abundance in this early 1950's scene at Raymond Ave yard. Norman F. Podas Jr. Photo

was discontinued because of the congestion and delay it caused. Railroads were allowed to interchange directly, but the Transfer continued to handle 2,000 - 3,000 cars per day.

Another contributing factor until after World War I was the refusal of Great Northern and Northern Pacific to let their freight cars run east of St. Paul.

The eastern roads were slow about returning them. Thus, each and every shipment to and from the east was transferred from one car to another at the big sheds located adjacent to the Transfer's main yard. Until 1922, all less-than-carload freight, called "lcl" among railroaders, also was handled by the Transfer rather than being interchanged directly.

Minnesota Transfer Railway including Main Line-ca. 1954





Looking north from roundhouse toward general office building. Minnesota Transfer Photo.

The Minnesota Transfer grew considerably with the acquisition in 1898 of the **Minnesota Belt Line Railway and Transfer**, incorporated in 1887. This road extended from the Great Northern's crossing of the Transfer in St. Anthony Park to a connection with the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific in Fridley.

Table 1

**CARS RECEIVED & FORWARDED,
MARCH, 1946**

Carrier	In		Out	
GN	8,870	24.2%	10,010	25.5%
Omaha	6,730	17.5	5,770	14.7
NP	4,290	11.2	5,910	15.0
Soo	4,530	11.8	4,360	11.1
MILW	5,550	14.5	5,130	13.1
RI	5,350	14.0	3,570	9.1
CGW	1,670	4.4	2,100	5.4
CB&Q	740	1.9	1,320	3.4
M&StL	590	1.5	1,000	2.5
Total	38,310		39,180	

Table 2

**Average Number of Road Trains Arriving & Leaving
Minnesota Transfer Ry Daily (April, 1947)**

To	Mpls	From	St Paul	To
(Via GN Mains, B & F Yards)				
4	8	(#2, CStPM&O)	7	6
		(#7, CGW)	4	4
4	8	Totals	11	10
(Across GN Mains via Raymond Ave Lead)				
12	13	(#3, GN)		
8	8	(#4, NP)		
3	3	(#8, CB&Q from Belt Line)		
8	8	(#99, Soo)		
9	9	(MTRY)		
40	41	Totals		
(Via NP Hi Line, A yard)				
2	2	(#5, M&StL)		
(Via MILW Mains, C & F Yard)				
3	3	(#1, MILW)	5	5
		(#10, CRI&P)	5	5
3	3	Totals	10	10
49	54	Grand Totals	21	20
Summary: 74 trains into MTRY				
70 trains out of MTRY daily				



In a scene repeated many times daily throughout St Paul's Midway, a cut of cars is pulled from an industrial spur, this one, the Kind Koil Mattress factory on Wabash Street. Arthur Hager Photo

Table 3

Interchange Time For Selected Trains, September 13, 1946.

Train	Cars	Hours Per Car		Interchanged
		Low	High	
RI 2655	35	10	170	31.5
RI 2633	21	14	64	39.2
RI 2642	50	15	179	61.4
Soo 1st 60	21	1	107	18.1
Soo 2nd 60	24	4	117	36.5
M&StL 605	11	10	38	16.8
NP 21	40	2	31	17.5
NP 92	38	8	49	15.2
GN 1st 137	35	4	58	11.6
GN 2nd 137	36	9	124	62.3
GN 782	27	6	173	35.4
Omaha 417	58	8	389	35.1
Omaha 412	42	2	66	17.2
Omaha 489	24	3	26	8.6
MTLW 760	14	21	159	73.8
MTLW 567	41	8	151	25.2

Employees call it the "belt line" to this day.

As rail traffic grew, so did the size of the transfer's yards. The "A" Yard was enlarged and equipped with a hump from 1907 to 1911. In 1907 the "R" Yard was opened for the sole purpose of storing and repairing bad order cars. The "F" and "J" Yards followed in 1915.

In 1919 the belt line was cut back to Central Avenue from the GN/NP connection near 71st and East River Road. No other major changes occurred until the University Avenue grade separation in 1935. By World War II, the Transfer operated the following track mileages:

12.03 mainline
76.77 yard tracks/sidings
57.16 industry tracks
145.96 Total

The Boom Years

Good times on the Transfer lasted into the 1960's. A marvelously detailed report written in 1947 describes every conceivable aspect of the operation in its prime. One of the authors was Norman F. Podas, father of MTM

member **Norm Podas** who provided the copy from which this article is written. The report enumerates operating conditions on the railroad and the need for capital improvements, construction of which began in the early 1950's.

In 1947, the railroad was coming off the incredible traffic surge of World War II. Business was down somewhat, but was still enormous by today's standards. The transfer assembled no less than 41 scheduled freight trains plus several unscheduled movements for owner railroads each day. It handled 2,100 cars, switched 296 industries and fielded 35 engine crews each day. It employed 580 people and 23 locomotives. Two separate freight houses received lcl shipments, and two separate stockyards received animals. The Transfer was big time by any measure.

Table 1 gives a feel for interchange volumes handled by the railroad. Of the 77,490 cars handled that month, 84 percent were interchanged, 10 percent originated at industries located on the Transfer and 6 percent were "interior handling" meaning bad order, held for icing or heater service and stockcars. The busiest spot of the railroad was **St. Anthony Tower** at the north end of the yard. Here the Transfer crossed the Great Northern which also hosted freight trains of the C&NW and passenger trains of the NP, CB&Q, CGW and C&NW. On October 30, 1946, for example, the Transfer moved 45 trains across St. Anthony's diamonds, while Great Northern moved another 86 trains.

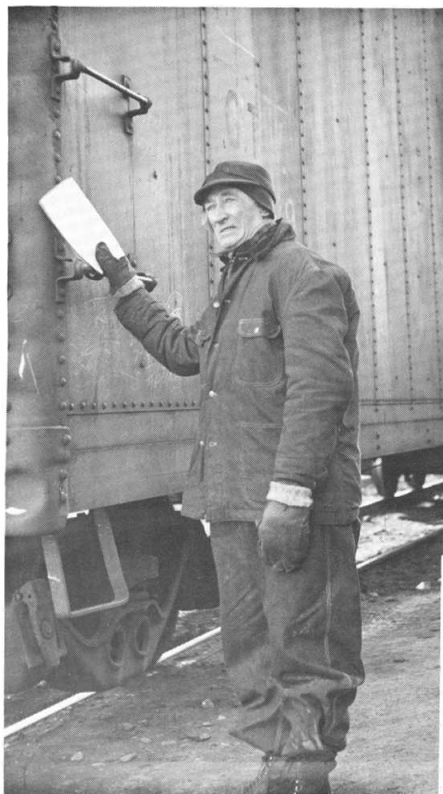
Table 2 shows the typical number of train movements. The owner roads delivered and picked up traffic at sever-



Here one of two Transfer Alco RS-2s #200 makes up a Omaha Road time freight.



Two mechanics get dirty repairing a 660 hp Alco switcher.



Top: Switchman Matthew Schoeben models classic railroader's winter garb as he classifies cars in the "P" yard. Arthur Haeger Photos.

Below: A special train ran in March, 1953, with a borrowed Great Northern coach. It is shown at the National Pole & Treating plant, New Brighton, at the far north end of the Belt Line. Norman F Podas Jr Photo .

al points along the Transfer. The Milwaukee Road and the Rock Island interchanged at Merriam Junction between Cleveland and Prior Avenues on the south end of the railroad, while the Soo Line interchanged at Bulwer Junction in New Brighton near the north end. By far the busiest interchange was near Raymond Avenue in St. Paul, controlled by the GN's St. Anthony Tower, where trains of the five roads left the GN and NP mainlines at three different locations.

St. Anthony Tower controlled the lumbering drag freights moving to and from the Transfer, as well as Great Northern's intersecting high speed passenger line between the two downtowns. Several dozen daily passenger trains of the Northern Pacific, Burlington, Great Western, Northern Western and Great Northern passed this point, usually at well over mile a minute speeds and providing interest-

ing train watching day or night. More interesting were the human and mechanical control systems which year after year kept slow freights and fast passengers from tangling.

Once a train got into one of the yards, the trick was to sort the cars and send them on their way with minimum delay. Here the pre-merger era of loose car railroading revealed its Achilles Heel. On the average, it took one and one-half days to interchange a car, which could be trapped for as long as two weeks. **Table 3** illustrates the problem. Long interchange times were unacceptable for time-sensitive shipments. The Transfer established special "short time connections" to guarantee reclassification of whole trains within two to four hours. This happened eleven times each day as shown

"4.a.m. GN time freight from Minneapolis pulls in A-13 or A-14 or icing platform. Has eastbound cars for MILW, RI, NP, Soo and industries to be ready by 7 a.m.

"4 a.m. MTRy engine brings NP time freight from Park Jct; pulls in on A-13, A-14 or icing platform. Has eastbound cars for MILW, RI, GN, Soo and industries to be ready by 7 a.m.





"5 to 6 a.m. Two Omaha time freights from St. Paul back into F Yard. Has westbound cars for GN, NP, Soo, MILW and industries to be ready by 8 a.m.

"5 to 6 a.m. CGW time freight from St. Paul backs into F Yard. Has westbound cars for GN, NP, Soo, MILW and industries to be ready by 8 a.m.

"5 to 6 a.m. MILW time freight from St. Paul backs into F Yard. Has westbound cars for GN, NP, Soo, and industries to be ready by 8 a.m.

"5 to 6 a.m. Two RI time freights pull into C or F Yards. Have westbound cars for GN, NP, Soo and industries to be ready by 8 a.m.

"4 a.m. MTRy engine brings Soo time freight from Bulwer Jct, pulls in on B-2, M&M 3 or C Yard. Has westbound cars for GN, NP, MILW and industries to be ready by 8 a.m.

"4 & 10 p.m. MTRy engines bring



"A" hump yard used rlders to bring each car to a stop. It was converted to a gravity yard with retarders. Norm Podas Photos.

Soo lines freights from Bulwer Jct. Have eastbound cars for MILW, RI, NP, GN to be ready in about 3 hours for departure."

In the early days, service to on line industries was discouraged and viewed as a distraction from the

Transfer's main role of interline switching. This thinking changed as the Midway area became heavily industrialized. By 1946 industry switching consumed 40 percent of engine shifts, and local shippers were divided into districts corresponding to their location on the railroad. The



Chief Engineer Norman Podas Sr, and General Manager Harry Congdon and Superintendant Carl Lamphere. Arthur Hager Photo.



Alco Switcher No 101 gets attention in the diesel shop, added to the roundhouse in 1952. Norman Podas Jr Photo.

report describes the following concentrations and locomotive assignments:

"Wabasha Avenue, 20 industries. Two engines assigned 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. with two additional engine hours used as needed.

"Myrtle Avenue, 22 industries. One engine switched about two hours between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Second engine switched between 4 and 8 p.m.

"Southeast, 17 industries. One engineer worked 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with one additional hour morning and evening work at American Can Company.

"Park Junction, 30 industries. One and one-half engine crew shifts worked daily with 2-3 daily round trips.

"St. Anthony Park, 33 industries. Lower yard engines worked this area about four afternoon hours each day.

"Central Warehouse, 35 industries. Lower yard engine worked about three hours throughout the day.

"Hennepin Avenue, 33 industries. One and one-half engine crew shifts worked daily with three round trips.

"Charles Street, 14 industries. Two engines worked 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. setting up freight house and industries.

"New Brighton, 19 industries.

"Charles Street Team Track, 11 industries.

"NP high line, 11 industries. Repair track engine worked about two hours daily."

About seven daily round trips were made to Bulwer Junction to service the Soo Line, accounting for about 14 engine hours. Seven additional daily trips were made to Park Junction to service the NP and the Burlington, requiring about three engine hours. To reach all these shippers, the Transfer maintained 57 miles of spurs

that wandered between buildings and in three locations traveled down city streets. Interchange was made with two electrified non-common carriers. The **Central Warehouse Company** used a GE steeplecab motor, and for a time MTM's Dan Patch No 100, to patrol its network of Midway area spurs. Just north of Como Avenue, the **University of Minnesota's** work motor picked up cars of coal and trundled them to the St. Paul Campus via the Intercampus trolley line operated by **Twin City Rapid Transit Company**.

Less than carload freight (lcl) moved in large quantities, and each local railroad had its own freight house. Several of these buildings still stand though none has served its intended purpose for many years. The Transfer built a large lcl facility in 1907 to handle interchange among all lines, on the model of its freight car operation. The facility was dismantled in 1928 when it proved cumbersome and uneconomical.

After that, two Transfer freight houses served mainly as receiving points for outbound lcl freight. Most of it was then trucked to the connecting carrier's closest freight house. A few lines received scheduled cars from the Transfer, and loaded greater than 8,000 pounds usually moved by rail rather than truck.

The larger Transfer freight house near the end of the Charles Street district had three platforms and trackage for 50 cars. The other was located just west of Stinson Boulevard on the Hennepin Avenue district next to the Northern Pacific mainline. Its three track, 33-car capacity seldom was used. A total of only 20 daily cars passed through the two houses in 1946. The Transfer had petitioned the Minnesota Railroad & Warehouse Commission several years earlier to abandon both lcl houses, but it was denied.

Despite the Transfer's low lcl volumes, it still was big business for the other lines. That same month, all Twin Cities freight houses together averaged 766 carloads per day and hit



Alco No 91 switches Waldorf Paper on Wabash Avenue district.



Last new steam power on the railroad were two ex-US Army 0-6-0's Norm Podas Photos. All Photos Courtesy of J J Hill Library.

as high as 1,162. On the down side, this volume was spread over a half dozen locations, and 10 percent of the cars were involved in some form of crosstown switching movement with its attendant delays.

One proposal to solve these problems was a massive new facility to be located on the Transfer and used jointly by all railroads. It would have had a capacity of 1,500 cars, and would have been built just east of the Transfer roundhouse if land had been available. Another proposed location along the Belt Line was rejected because it was inaccessible to public transportation. Ultimately, the facili-

ty never was built.

Stock handling figured into the Transfer's role from the beginning. When it was independent, the Belt Line made its money hauling stock from the NP/GN interchange in Fridley to the New Brighton stockyards. Meat processors and a stock exchange were located next to the Midway Yards at University Avenue.

Eventually both were eclipsed by much larger operations in South St. Paul. The stock exchange closed and became a YMCA. The meat packers disappeared and the 31 pens along Prior Avenue were relegated to rest-

ing and watering the animals on their way to somewhere else. The larger New Brighton yards with 92 pens were used to handle the overflow due to their less convenient location. Volume tended to be greatest in the Fall. In September, 1946, for example, the heaviest day was 141 cars handled; 102 at New Brighton and 40 at Midway. In the early 1950's, operations were consolidated at New Brighton and the Midway stockyards were closed. Since then, livestock virtually have disappeared from the rails. All that remains at New Brighton are the concrete pen floors and the annual Stockyard Days celebration.

The 1947 report proposed extensive rebuilding of facilities and restructuring the the Transfer's operations. Between 1950 and 1953, most of the structures in the Midway Yards were replaced or upgraded. The diesel shop was added to the Cleveland Avenue roundhouse which also was refurbished. "A" Yard was converted from a rider hump operation to a gravity yard featuring more gently gradients. The "P" Yard was extensively rebuilt and much trackwork was renewed elsewhere. The old icing platforms were supplanted by a mobile lift truck which was found to be both cheaper and more flexible. An unremarked improvement was a pneumatic tube system between the office building and the two yard offices, over a mile in length. It replaced three full time messengers and two automobiles. The yard changes cut the daily engine crew requirement by four. In total, the Transfer spent over \$3 million on capital improvements during these years.

Decline and Rebirth

The merger era eliminated the complexities of interchange and with it the need for a centralized transfer facility. Since 1960, the M&StL, CGW, NP, GN, CB&Q and CMStP&P all have disappeared as independent carriers. Small freight yards closed all over town as sorting was consolidated. The lcl traffic dwindled to nothing as time-sensitive shipments went to the trucks. The St.

Paul Union Depot closed ending the Transfer's responsibility for it. The Twin Cities meat packing industry migrated elsewhere, and trucks took all the live animal transport. The Midway and New Brighton stockyards closed.

It seemed the era of the terminal railroad had come to an end. Others such as the Minneapolis Eastern, St. Paul Bridge & Terminal, and the Lake Superior Terminal & Transfer companies all quietly were folded into the big roads. The Minneapolis, Northfield & Southern, formerly the Dan Patch Line, had made a good living drawing traffic moving from the Great Western at Randolph and the Rock Island at Northfield moving to and from the Northtown, Humboldt and Shoreham yards on the north and west sides of the city. Suddenly the Great Western and Rock were no more, and Dan Patch became an appendage of the Soo Line.

Its gateway function gone by the 1970's, the Minnesota Transfer closed the C, F, J and P yards and sold the land for the new Midway Industrial Park. Interestingly, this brought passenger trains to the Transfer in the form of **Amtrak's** new Midway Station, and a number of through freight movements that never before existed. The Soo-Milwaukee merger sent through freight and transfer movements over the Minnesota Transfer between Shoreham and Pig's Eye yard, although much of this lately has shifted to the two Burlington Northern routes between the Cities. For a couple of years, the North Western's ex-M&StL line to Madison, MN, used the Transfer to reach trackage rights on the Milwaukee at Merriam Park.

The shortline wave of the 1980's finally swept up the Minnesota Transfer in its 104th year of operation. Rumors of the Transfer's demise abounded for years. It was thought that the three owning railroads would divide the Transfer's trackage among themselves, something they never did. Ultimately, an independent carrier, the **Minnesota Commercial Railway**, took over operation of the Transfer.

On the model of so many successful new shortlines, Minnesota Commercial has shrunk crew size from five employees to two who now are non-union. According to General Manager **Marv Schnickels**, a 35-year Transfer veteran, lower costs have allowed rate reductions of \$100 per car, about one-third of the previous charge. The Transfer had quoted complex, cost-based rates, while the new Commercial quotes flat charges per car anywhere on its routes.

Executive Vice President **Ed Coxhead** beats the bushes for new customers and to bring back old ones. He appears to have been successful. Carloading are up 20 percent over last year. President **John Gohmann** has 25 years of rail experience with such lines as the C&NW and the EJ&E.. His company, **Gohmann & Associates**, has started other shortlines.

The Minnesota Commercial has a strong traffic base of over 80 industries. Three daily crews are called. One works the Midway area industries while a second works the Belt Line to County Road D in Roseville and also the East Hennepin Industries. A third crew works the rest of the Belt Line to New Brighton and Fridley. Spurs that used to see twice a week service now are visited daily, and for the first time in years, a crew sometimes is called on a Sunday.

Motive power is three of the familiar Electro-Motive SW-1500's, and management would like to pick up two more engines. The roundhouse had received a facelift and now houses all management personnel after the old office building on University Avenue was demolished in October, 1987. The new Minnesota Commercial no longer is a non-profit railroad.

About The Rear Cover

Single truck open car of TCL crosses Robert Street bridge, St Paul, about 1905. **Ramsey County Historical Society Photo.**



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